

5 REASONS TO LOVE THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB

HISTORIC BRAGGING RIGHTS The nation's oldest recreation and conservation group was founded here in Boston in 1876 by an MIT physicist named Edward Pickering, who invited fellow brainiacs and outdoors enthusiasts to join him in exploring the White Mountains. Today the club, which focuses on conservation and education throughout New England, is headquartered on Beacon Hill and has more than 100,000 members in 12 chapters, from Maine to Washington, DC.

HUTS In 1888 the club built the first of eight communal huts along the Appalachian Trail, and trekkers have been overnighing in the White Mountain National Forest ever since. Based on similar dwellings in the Alps, the popular huts hold from 36 to 90 people at a time, and in summer the overnight fee includes dinner and breakfast. Three huts are open in winter: Lonesome Lake, Zealand Falls, and Carter Notch. Guests cook their own food. Snowshoe the six-mile Zealand Hut trek, or go with a guide. As you walk, the naturalists will tell you all about wintertime birds and other life in the hardwood forests; at night, you'll bunk by the warmth of a wood stove. Upcoming trips include the family-friendly Carter Notch Hut climb (leaving from Pinkham Notch on February 15) and the 1.6-mile Lonesome Lake walk through Franconia Notch State Park (February 23). Reservations required.

CAMPS The AMC's sporting camp-to-camp network in Maine's North Woods is a new variation of its hut-to-hut system in the Whites. With the camps spaced seven to 10 miles apart, adventurers can snowshoe, cross-country ski, or dogsled from one to the next, creating the perfect adventure. Each of the staffed camps offers lodging and meals, and the circa-1873 Little Lyford Lodge and Cabins even has a sauna. The AMC runs two- and four-night guided trips in February and early March, or you can opt to do the

trail network on your own through the end of March. For families with children, the AMC recommends the tame 8.7-mile route around Shaw Mountain, which has stunning views. Add moose, beaver, fox, and the priceless sound of that laughing loon echoing across the lonely expanse, and you have one sweet American safari. Reservations required. For guided tours, two-night, all-inclusive rates start at \$343 for adult AMC members and \$387 for adult nonmembers.

VARIETY Club members like to balance their environmental activism with outdoor recreation, particularly hiking and backpacking. There's also cross-country skiing, whitewater and flatwater canoeing and kayaking, sea kayaking, sailing, rock climbing, and cycling. The AMC's 2,700 volunteers lead roughly 7,000 trips and activities each year. Example: The club teaches its introductory ice-climbing course February 26–28 at the legendary Frankenstein Cliff in New Hampshire's Crawford Notch State Park. In no time at all, you'll be scampering like Spiderman up frozen waterfalls.

VISION For years the club has been buying up camps and property, including 37,000 acres in the 100-Mile Wilderness region, which is almost sacred land for hikers. This last leg of the Appalachian Trail is a region of seemingly endless forest, mountains, lakes, and too many ponds to count. "The ponds here are the most beautiful, remote bodies of water you can possibly imagine," says AMC executive director Andy Falender. Last November, the AMC expanded its territory and sporting camps by more than 29,000 acres, broadening recreation opportunities for all New Englanders. The purchase "was the missing piece," Falender says. "With adjoining land owned by the state and the Nature Conservancy, [the purchase] preserves a 63-mile corridor for outdoor lovers and wildlife."

For more information on the AMC, go to outdoors.org. For reservations, call 603-466-2727.



HOW TO... DRESS UP YOUR SNOW CREAM

Chef Joanne Chang recommends the same addictive Vietnamese coffee sauce that she serves over her chocolate cake at Myers + Chang.

> Start with 2 tablespoons of instant coffee powder. (Chang is a fan of good old-fashioned Folgers, but any instant joe or espresso powder will do.)

> In a small bowl, dissolve powder into just enough hot water to create a thick paste.

> Stir coffee paste into 3/4 cup of sweetened condensed milk.

> Add a pinch of salt.

> Pour mixture over a cup or bowl of shaved ice or packed snow.

> Sprinkle chocolate shavings on top.



Go SKIJORING!

PEACE PUPS DOG SLEDDING LAKE ELMORE, VT

Scandinavians of yore hitched up their reindeer and skied at the ends of the reins for transportation, an activity that has, like so much else, become an actual winter sport. Skijoring competitions feature horses, dogs, and even mules that pull skiers through courses. Forget about competing, though: If your regular ski routine needs some, um, bark, Peace Pups Dog Sledding will teach you how to hitch up your BFF and swoosh the country miles. (If your poodle isn't exactly thrilled about the idea, borrow a Peace Pups husky for an extra \$25.) Once you're ready to go out on your own, Bethel Inn Resort in Bethel, Maine, has a skijoring loop, 239 Cross Rd., Lake Elmore, VT, 802-888-7733, peacepupsdogsledding.com; 21 Broad St., Bethel, ME, 800-654-0125, bethelinn.com.

CRAFTON PONDS Grafton, VT Grafton Ponds is one of the few cross-country ski centers in New England that make snow, meaning the trail is always primed. And with almost 20 miles to traverse, there's plenty to explore. Make it up to Big Bear Shelter, atop the ridge, and your reward is a cup of hot chocolate and views of picturesque Grafton Village. 783 Townshend Rd., Grafton, VT, 802-843-2400, graftonponds.com.

JACKSON SKI TOURING FOUNDATION Jackson, NH The largest cross-country skiing network in the Northeast has nearly 100 miles of trails for all levels. The easy Ellis River Trail borders a brook, while the Wildcat Valley Trail pitches steeply down the back of Wildcat Mountain, to the town of Jackson. If you're up for it, take the Groomed Trail Challenge on February 21, when cross-country aficionados try to ski as much of the network as possible in an 11-hour day. 153 Main St., Jackson, NH, 603-383-9355, jacksonxc.org.

BLUEBERRY HILL INN Goshen, VT This classic Vermont inn and Nordic ski center lies 12 miles outside of Middlebury and deep within the Moosalamoo National Recreation Area. The 40-plus miles of groomed runs include the highest (Romance, elevation 3,000 feet) and what some consider the most scenic (Hogback) trails in the state. 1307 Goshen Ripton Rd., Goshen, VT, 802-247-6735, blueberryhillinn.com.

And for Classic Cross-Country

TRY

SNOWMOBILE MOOSEHEAD LAKE

THE COZY MOOSE GREENVILLE, ME

Seriously, chocolate and silk teddies are so over—here's a new way to rev things up. The Cozy Moose at Moosehead Lake, home of some of New England's finest snowmobiling action, offers popular "Sled and Bed" couples' packages that include lodging, sled rentals, and base apparel (bib overalls, boots, gloves, full-face helmets). The three-night, two-day packages range from \$1,325 (for an efficiency suite) to \$1,825 (for a cedar-log cabin with fireplace, decks, Jacuzzi tub, and satellite TV). Longtime owners Heather and Ron Davis recommend arriving on Sunday and taking a Monday snowmobile tour with guide Mike Witham, who's been buzzing the backcountry long enough to know exactly where to find bobcats, owls, coyotes, eagles, hares, and, if you're really lucky, the holy grail: moose. 451 Moosehead Lake Rd., Greenville, ME, 207-695-0242, mooseheadcabins.com.



FYI If you're a renter, you're entitled by state law to a home heated to at least 68 degrees during the day and 64 degrees at night. If you're sporting nose-cicles, talk to your landlord first. If that doesn't work, call Boston Inspectional Services at 617-635-5322.



HUTS PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY AND MARCYM OREMAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BILL CURTI, MEGAN LUTY, IMAGES (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) JEFFREY JAMES